United Nations S/PV.5525

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5525th meeting

Friday, 15 September 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Vassilakis/Mrs. Papadopoulou	(Greece)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Congo	Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. De La Sablière
	Ghana	Mr. Yankey
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Ms. Tincopa
	Qatar	Mr. Al-Qahtani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Dolgov
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Mahiga
	United States of America	Mr. Bolton

Agenda

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-52438 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Africa

Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

It is so decided.

I invite Mr. Egeland to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Egeland: Thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Council on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Uganda, where I visited last week.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I visited Kinshasa and then went into the field in Katanga, South Kivu and Ituri. I would like to share three main conclusions from my mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First, the United Nations and the Transitional Government have made a lot of progress, with increased security and successful elections, but we have not been able to make enough of an impact on impunity. Sexual abuse has become a cancer in Congolese society that seems to be out of control. Military and civilian authorities are still virtually unaccountable for crimes against civilians. I told President Kabila and the military and civilian leaders that I met that they had to publicly condemn impunity and act firmly to fire or demote perpetrators. President Kabila replied that the contradictions in the Transitional Government had made the latter difficult for him, but one could act more firmly after the elections.

In South Kivu alone, more than 1,000 women who had been raped have been treated so far this year at the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, where I visited. We do not know how many more suffer without treatment in inaccessible parts of the province. I was deeply shocked by the stories of the women who had been abused by the members of the national army — the FARDC — and by militia groups. One woman told me she had been raped repeatedly for more than a week by a group of soldiers who kept her bound so tightly — by hands and by feet — that she had permanently lost the use of her hands. Dr. Mukengere, the heroic director of Panzi Hospital, told me that mutilations often followed the rapes. Those required extensive surgical interventions.

I do not believe that the FARDC is systematically addressing this issue. Although some military prosecutions have occurred, often because of the efforts of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), far too little is being done. This Council and the Member States involved in security sector reform in that country must exert more pressure on the FARDC to end this pattern of abuse and violence against civilians.

Secondly, I am concerned about the impact of FARDC military operations on the civilian population. Since the beginning of the year more than 500,000 people have been newly displaced in eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In most cases, the displacements follow a Government army operation against a militia group. Too often, civilians flee because of the fighting and then are victimized by the FARDC, who blame them for supporting the militias. In the Kivus and Ituri, MONUC provides logistical support for those operations. The only long-term security solution in the country is, of course, through one competent national army with the exclusive right to bear arms. Nonetheless, we cannot accept such a huge cost on the civilian population caused by the recent operations to disarm. The MONUC Force Commander has invited the humanitarian community to look at ways to reduce the humanitarian impact of those operations. We accept this offer.

Thirdly, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has improved. Compared to my last visit three years ago, there are more humanitarian staff working in more areas, including some areas that were totally inaccessible for years. When we went out to meet with internally displaced persons (IDPs) in remote locations in the bush — Pweto, Lubago and Gety — I was impressed with the work done by United Nations and NGO colleagues, often under very difficult circumstances. However, the humanitarian effort still lacks the resources it requires to meet the overwhelming needs. For example, we do not have money for the food pipeline beyond the next three months. In 2007, we will expand our humanitarian programmes and intensify early recovery efforts to meet the needs of the more than 1.6 million IDPs who returned home in the last year, often with little assistance.

The national disarmament and reintegration programme run by the Commission Nationale de Désarmement, Démobilisation et Réinsertion (CONADER) is not working effectively. In Pweto, in the southwest, I met with a group of Mayi-Mayi who had voluntarily disarmed weeks before. However, CONADER claimed that it no longer had resources to serve them, and MONUC military observers had to take it upon themselves to share their rations to avoid looting by the Mayi-Mayi of the civilian population. Other Mayi-Mayi groups who were ready to come out of the bush have not because they want to be sure they will be taken care of. In Ituri, MONUC has been successful in disarming militia members, but the programmes needed to reintegrate them into civilian life have been insufficient. Unless these problems are quickly fixed, these fighters will return to the life of the gun.

The challenges ahead in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are enormous. It will be a marathon, and we are still only half way. We cannot stop now or we will lose what we have gained. The Council should show its strong commitment to the Democratic Republic by maintaining MONUC's strength and maintaining the pressure on the Government to end impunity and promote the rule of law and good governance. The conclusion of the elections is the beginning of the rebuilding process, not its end. The Democratic Republic of the Congo has seen the worst haemorrhage of human life in this generation. Four million people — six Rwandan genocides — is the death toll of war and preventable disease in the last eight years. We must not fail to stop — once and for all — this tragedy.

Let me turn now to Uganda. The picture in northern Uganda is more promising than it has been in years. We can see improvement on almost every indicator. Since the negotiations between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) began in Juba earlier this year, security has increased dramatically, allowing us to do much more on the humanitarian front. We can now reach 54 of the 102 IDP camps without military escorts, up from 34 in May. I was able to spend a memorable night in a family hut in Opit IDP camp, something no United Nations staff member had been able to do for many years. IDPs in Acholiland are cautiously beginning to move towards their homes. We stopped along the country road to talk with a family who were making bricks for a temporary house two kilometres from their ancestral lands so that they could begin farming again. If peace continued, they planned to finally move home in January.

The number of night commuters has fallen to 10,000, from a high of 40,000 when I reported to you last year. Few of the remaining children are moving because of insecurity now. Most continue to move to the towns every night because of social problems at home related to prolonged displacement, such as domestic violence and overcrowding.

We will use the better security environment to continue to improve the situation in the IDP camps and to prepare for the return of more than 1.5 million people. The Government will need to rapidly increase social services in the north, including the return of teachers, doctors and nurses. The Prime Minister told me that the Government was working on this through the Joint Monitoring Commission and the Government's peace, reconciliation and development plan. The international community must soon make the necessary investments in peace and hold the Government accountable for effective protection of the civilian population and a real reconciliation process.

As the Council is aware, Riek Machar, the Vice-President of the government of South Sudan, has been facilitating talks between the Government of Uganda and the LRA. On 26 August, the two sides signed a cessation of hostilities agreement. I visited Juba on 11 September to address the humanitarian aspects of a

possible peace agreement. I met with Vice-President Machar and his mediation team, the Government and the LRA delegations, and with the Acholi religious and cultural leaders who are observing the talks. I commended Vice-President Machar for the progress of this African-led peace process and offered increased United Nations support for the South Sudanese mediation efforts.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and UNICEF already have staff members providing technical support to the mediation team, and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) will dispatch someone over the weekend. Norway has provided financial support for the peace talks through OCHA, and several other European donors have indicated their willingness to also support these efforts. That is critical to keep the process moving forward. The government of South Sudan does not have the resources to support the rapid progress of the talks. In addition, Vice-President Machar asked that the United Nations provide monitors for the cessation of hostilities agreement and assembly areas for LRA fighters, along with monitors from the parties and the African Union. I have transmitted that request to the Secretary-General.

The cessation of hostilities agreement requires the LRA to move to two assembly points in the southern Sudan by 19 September. Those are shown on the map that will be distributed. Reports from the field confirm that LRA units are moving from northern Uganda towards the assembly area at Owiny-Ki-Bul, and from the northern Democratic Republic of the Congo into Ri-Kwangba. An estimated 400 combatants and non-combatants have so far arrived at the two assembly points. Development Support Services reports that most LRA members have now left northern Uganda for the southern Sudan.

The United Nations has already assessed the situation in the two assembly points and is prepared to provide assistance to the women and children with the LRA, whom the parties have agreed can be separated from the LRA fighters. We will also help the surrounding communities. The government of South Sudan has moved some food supplies to the areas. The United Nations country team in Uganda reconfirmed to me that they have the resources necessary to receive ex-combatants and women and children and to begin their reintegration into northern Uganda, when agreed by the parties.

While in Uganda and the southern Sudan, I received several telephone calls from Vincent Otti, the second-in-command in the LRA. He invited me to meet with him at the western assembly point. I told him that I could come only if the LRA made a humanitarian gesture and released some of the women and children it is holding. The LRA has not yet agreed to such a release, but we will continue to press for the quick release of the Sudanese and Ugandan captives.

It is important for the Council to know that the International Criminal Court indictments were the number one subject of discussion with the internally displaced persons in Uganda and the parties and civil society in Juba. All expressed a strong concern that if the indictments were not lifted, they could threaten the progress in these most promising talks ever for northern Uganda. I said I believed that the indictments had been a factor in pushing the LRA into negotiations, that the indictments should not disrupt the talks, and that there could be no impunity for mass murder and crimes against humanity. The parties should look now at the different ways to develop a solution that meets local needs for reconciliation and universal standards of justice and accountability. I believe that this can be done, and that peace and justice can work together. For the Council's information, I have discussed that approach with Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo, who repeated that the United Nations should indeed support the peace talks, aiming for the return of women and children, the demobilization of fighters and a solution that makes peace and justice work together.

This is the best chance we have ever had for peace in northern Uganda. We must pursue it to the end. As a woman asked me around the campfire in Opit, "If we cannot find peace now, who will we blame for another 20 years of war?" The Security Council's interest in this issue has been crucial for the progress to date. The Council should show its support for the talks and encourage the Government and the LRA to reach a final agreement as soon as possible. The Council should also express its support for the Government's efforts to develop a recovery plan for the North, while stressing the need for the affected communities to be fully engaged in this process. Finally, the Council should stress the need for a reconciliation process that addresses the root causes of this long and terrible conflict and ensures the future protection of the civilian population.

The President: I thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): I would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his thorough update on the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda. We certainly would have liked to hear more about other parts of Africa, but I hope we shall have another opportunity to discuss and get insight on the evolving situation in other parts of the continent.

We are delighted to hear that what used to be called the "forgotten emergency" in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is finally getting some attention. We urge donors, non-governmental organizations and the international community as a whole to improve the food pipeline and to assist the courageous non-governmental organizations on the ground so that their work can be effective.

We are alarmed by the reports of impunity, especially in the area of sexual violence. It is imperative, as the Democratic Republic of the Congo moves towards elections and a Government elected by the people, that the training of the armed forces be given priority, especially in the area of discipline and relations with the civilian population. It is very disturbing to hear that most of the cases reported have related to the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo or elements thereof.

It is of particular importance that, in the eastern part of the country, where the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) is effectively involved but some armed groups remain, MONUC undertake closer coordination with the Congolese armed forces to address not only the security area, but the extent to which the confidence of the population can be restored, especially after the elections. As we watch the outcome of the next round of elections, we hope that the Government will take more decisive measures in addressing the issues of discipline, even including the dismissal of armed forces and the disbandment of militias that have been engaged in such atrocities.

We are gratified to hear about the improvements in the situation in northern Uganda. It should be borne in mind that humanitarian action can greatly facilitate the negotiations that are going on in Juba. We appreciate Mr. Egeland's overtures and the contacts that he has already made. In the area of the release of abducted persons, we should continue to be more vigilant, because abductions, especially of young people and women, have been the trademark of the Lord's Resistance Army.

We are particularly concerned, with respect both to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda, that the issue of disarmament and reintegration has not received adequate resources. That may not only entail the danger of militias' returning to arms, but cause continuing insecurity among the population. It is an issue not only of food, but also of sustainable reintegration. We are also mindful of the need for the reintegration of refugees who are returning from neighbouring countries and the internally displaced persons who will need to be resettled. It has often been a problem of resources, and in the integrated appeals that will follow, the humanitarian dimension should be given priority.

As I said earlier, we hope that Mr. Egeland will be able in subsequent discussions to provide a broader survey of the humanitarian situation in the continent — not only in Darfur and the Horn, but also in southern Africa, where there are still countries that are going through humanitarian crises precipitated by several factors, such as in Zimbabwe at the moment.

Mr. Yankey (Ghana): I wish to add a word of appreciation for Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland's thought-provoking assessment of the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. We welcome the positive developments that he highlighted, but we are also concerned about the remaining obstacles to the extension of relief to displaced persons. Obviously, the achievement of durable peace is the key to the elimination of the humanitarian problems that he has highlighted. It is therefore only right that the Security Council continues to be fully seized of the humanitarian consequences of conflict as an integral part of its mandate.

It is well established that the forced displacement of large segments of populations has become part of the strategy of combatants in furtherance of their military objectives. We need to pay close attention to that. From our perspective, we have to focus closely on the factors that aggravate suffering in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Those factors include restrictions on humanitarian access and the use of aid-dependant civilian populations as hostages and

political bargaining chips. Insofar as such restrictions have potential genocidal effects on displaced populations, there is a need to assign criminal liability to identified offenders in that regard, and to pursue their prosecution as far as practicable. We agree with the Under-Secretary-General that, whatever the outcome of the peace talks in Juba between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government, those liable for International Criminal Court prosecution should meet the fate to be allotted to them.

Secondly, the deliberate targeting of humanitarian workers, who are often the main lifelines for IDPs and refugees, also deserves to be given much more serious attention in the international criminal justice system. Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of women and children should also not be tolerated. Related to that is the phenomenon of human trafficking, which has been reported to exist in certain camps in other parts of Africa.

The proliferation of small arms in IDP camps — and we have just heard, in the course of the briefing, what the Mayi Mayi have been doing — is also another problem that deserves the Council's attention. Those arms are frequently used to terrorize displaced persons, and they always have the risk of turning camps into staging grounds for bloody armed confrontations, thereby aggravating the humanitarian situation.

There is also the risk of the permanent displacement of IDPs. I have in mind northern Uganda, where a whole generation of people has been born and raised in such camps, with little prospects of return and of being integrated into the wider society. The threat posed by prolonged stays in those camps should not be underestimated. Given the changing dynamics of conflicts on the continent, those camps could be fertile grounds to recruit mercenaries, and even terrorists.

We recognize that not much can be achieved without adequate funding. We commend those countries, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups that continue to be the backbone of the global humanitarian effort, particularly in Africa. Nonetheless, we support the appeal for extra resources so that the agencies and groups on the ground can carry on with the vital work they are doing.

Finally, we believe that the African Union and other subregional groupings bear the primary responsibility to provide humanitarian relief for their own kith and kin. We hope to work with other African countries to explore ways to enhance our contribution to humanitarian relief on the continent.

Mr. De La Sablière (France) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank the delegation of Greece for taking the initiative of organizing this meeting. I also wish to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing. It is always with great interest that we listen to him as he explains the situation on the ground.

At the outset, I would like to commend the progress that has been made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The humanitarian response of the United Nations and its partners is today more swift than in was the past. But the improvement made should not lead us to forget reality. The briefing just given to us by Jan Egeland reminds us of the reality that the situation in certain parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has produced one of the most lethal humanitarian crises in world. That continues to be a matter of great concern.

Given the scale of the movement of displaced persons and refugees, I would first like to emphasize the basic principle of the voluntary return of refugees to their countries. That principle must always be very closely monitored.

We are also concerned about the needs of local populations that suffer the burden of large numbers of displaced persons.

The involvement of children in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of particular concern. It is my hope that Congolese authorities, United Nations agencies and the main donors will quickly implement the recommendations just made by the Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict.

My delegation would like to reiterate its support for the work of United Nations agencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as for the United Nations 2006 Action Plan. We urge the Congolese Government to become closely involved in the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Of course, we must also strengthen the coordination of international assistance and United Nations programmes, so as to ensure that humanitarian assistance can meet the needs of the entire country.

I also think we should welcome the return of institutional donors to the Democratic Republic of the

Congo, including the European Commission and the World Bank. I am pleased that donors are prepared to reinvest following the transition that has taken place with regard to infrastructure and basic services.

My country welcomes the ceasefire agreement signed on 26 August between the Government of Uganda and the LRA rebellion. That agreement is a first step towards a final resolution of the conflict in Uganda. However, the search for peace should be reconciled with the need not to guarantee impunity, especially for those responsible for the most serious violations of international humanitarian law.

On the humanitarian front, France is dedicated to the social reintegration of child soldiers — especially those unfortunate girls who have been raped — as well as to the provision of psychological assistance.

My delegation welcomes the work done by UNICEF, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Ugandan Human Rights Commission in accordance with resolution 1612 (2005).

Mrs. Itoua Apoyolo (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, my delegation is very grateful to you for having included on the agenda of the Security Council an issue of such great concern as the humanitarian situation in Africa. Indeed, this issue is of concern not only to Africans but to the international community as a whole, given that the deterioration of the humanitarian situation is in large part related to the outbreak of conflicts, combined with the consequences of natural disasters, which have occurred in many countries.

My delegation would like also to pay tribute to Mr. Jan Egeland, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, for his responsiveness and his dedication to his very difficult and hazardous task. I should like once again to assure him of the support and cooperation of our delegation.

On the basis of Mr. Egeland's report, prepared following his visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Uganda, we have very mixed feelings. We are happy to hear of the return of many refugees in general and of the long-overdue signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). On that score, we are extremely pleased. However, we cannot remain indifferent to the fact that insecurity and impunity continue to afflict millions of people, who, thus deprived, must rely on humanitarian assistance.

It is true that the signing of the agreement between the Ugandan Government and the LRA is a promising sign for the peoples of the north, who have suffered all sorts of atrocities during the last two decades of war, as well as for stability in the Great Lakes region as a whole. It is intolerable that women and girls continue to be raped and that child soldiers continue to be recruited.

Despite of the progress made in humanitarian terms in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Uganda, enormous challenges remain, because not all factors of instability have been eliminated. For that reason, my delegation believes that there is a need to ensure the implementation of the cessation of hostilities agreement and the peace process that is under way, which represents an excellent opportunity to put an end to 20 years of war in northern Uganda.

There is a need also to accelerate the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and to put an end to impunity with regard to the perpetrators of serious violations of human rights, through existing mechanisms. It is vital also to call on all parties, wherever necessary, to recognize the neutrality of humanitarian personnel and to ensure their security. It is also imperative to encourage the international community to continue its efforts on behalf of humanitarian assistance in Africa by mobilizing greater resources so as to address these enormous challenges.

Finally, I should like to reiterate once again my delegation's commitment to the implementation of resolution 1625 (2005) relating to the prevention and settlement of conflicts, without which international peace and security will continue to be threatened and humanitarian problems, which we deplore, will remain acute.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): I should like to begin by joining others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Jan Egeland for his comprehensive briefing.

Given their gravity and serious implications, the humanitarian crises of Africa merit more of our attention and of our political and financial resources. Violent conflicts, food shortages and governance crises are some of the most widespread causes. The powers of

nature — floods and droughts — account for only a fraction of these. Most humanitarian crises are manmade, and it is fair to say that if we have the collective will, all those causes and all those humanitarian crises highlighted by Mr. Egeland can be influenced and corrected through concerted action by all parties involved.

Let me take this opportunity to comment on the situations in the Sudan and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the recent positive developments with regard to the situation in northern Uganda. I would like also to underline the fact that the humanitarian situation in a number of other countries in Africa — Zimbabwe being one of them — also requires the close attention of the international community.

The situation in the Sudan continues to top the agenda of the Council. While the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan remains stable and has led to some optimism, we are all too aware of the sharp deterioration of the situation in Darfur. Increased fighting, restrictions on humanitarian access and direct targeting of humanitarian workers have pushed the situation to the brink of catastrophe. In the absence of eyes and ears on the ground, when not only aid personnel but also journalists are prohibited from accessing the most vulnerable areas, the rest of the world has reason to be extremely worried.

An immediate strengthening of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) is essential, not only in word but also in deed. A decision on extending the mandate of AMIS will, hopefully, be taken next week, and the resources and additional capacity must follow. They are so desperately needed. At the same time, the joint planning of the transfer of AMIS to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) must continue without delay.

If security in Darfur is allowed to deteriorate even further, we might soon be faced with tens of thousands of refugees crossing into neighbouring countries, with further destabilizing consequences for the entire region. We would also be faced with a scenario not unlike the one we saw in Rwanda in 1994 — a scenario that we have promised ourselves would never be repeated.

With more than 1,000 people dying every day, mainly as a result of the continuing conflict in the east, the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is extremely worrying. Only through peace and stability can the humanitarian situation be eased. In order not to lose the present window of opportunity to achieve peace, lasting stability, democracy and sustained economic development, the political actors must first of all respect the electoral process and work constructively to support democratic development.

On a much more positive note, I would like to welcome the cessation of hostilities agreement between Uganda and the rebels, the Lord's Resistance Army. It is a very important step in the right direction, and, as Mr. Egeland has stated, this recent development represents the best hope for sustainable peace in the region in some time.

We urge the parties to agree on a comprehensive settlement which would pave the way for efforts to help improve the deplorable living conditions of the nearly 2 million internally displaced persons in northern Uganda. To secure lasting peace, impunity must be addressed, and I should like to use this opportunity to remind Uganda of its responsibility to find a solution consistent with its obligations under international law.

Zimbabwe is not on the agenda for today's briefing. Nevertheless, I would like to stress our continued concern regarding the humanitarian situation in the country, a situation that, we all know, is extremely serious and is getting worse. A huge and growing number of Zimbabweans are suffering from food insecurity, homelessness and/or the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I would like to ask Mr. Egeland to give his assessment of the present situation in that country and to update us on the cooperation between the United Nations and Zimbabwe.

Finally, let me conclude by commending the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and Mr. Egeland for the active advocacy role they continue to play.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): First, I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his briefing on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. The historic general election in the Democratic Republic has become the most important event in the political life of that country. Thanks to the considerable efforts by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the International Committee

in Support of the Transition (CIAT), as well as all parties in the Democratic Republic, the election is progressing smoothly.

At the same time, we have also noticed that in the eastern part of the country there are still some issues in the humanitarian and human rights fields. We believe the political and security situation is interdependent with the humanitarian situation. On the one hand, a sound political and security situation would aid in ameliorating the humanitarian crisis. On the other hand, improvement of the humanitarian situation would promote further progress in the political and security situation.

In the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, especially in North and South Kivu, improvement of the humanitarian situation would impact positively on the general election, which must be conducted in an environment of peace, security and stability. It is hoped that before the new Government comes into force, the transitional Government will remain unified in discharging its responsibilities to manage the country, and that it will find a politically practical solution to the humanitarian problem prevailing in the eastern part of the country.

With regard to Uganda, for a long time that Government has been making unremitting efforts to find a solution to the situation in the northern part of the country and calm the tensions existing there. We are heartened to notice that important breakthroughs have been made in the negotiations between the Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). The LRA has agreed to lay down its weapons, repatriate the kidnapped women and children, assemble at designated points and implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. It is believed that such an important development will have an important bearing on the situation in the northern part of Uganda as well as on the stability of the country as a whole.

It is hoped that the international community can find an early solution to the issue of the indictment by the International Criminal Court of Kony, the head of the LRA, as that would pave the way for an early solution to the issue of the LRA.

Mr. Bolton (United States of America): I want to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his informative briefing on the current state of humanitarian affairs across the African continent, and particularly on his recent trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda and southern Sudan. We are grateful to Mr. Egeland for taking on that timely mission.

Let me say at the outset that the United States is encouraged by what appear to be some positive developments in resolving some of the longstanding humanitarian problems in Africa. For example, we would note that the return of refugees and displaced persons in Angola and Liberia is nearly complete, and that the process is also underway in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and southern Sudan.

We also share Mr. Egeland's cautious optimism about the situations in northern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We recognize that support for peace and reconciliation efforts, as well as for the basic recovery of the social and economic infrastructure in all of those post-conflict situations, will be critical to the sustainable resolution of those protracted crises. We add our hope that external financial support for the recovery of those countries is shared more broadly by a wider donor community, since we all benefit from the peace and security that should result.

The United States is encouraged by the ongoing negotiations between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and we are monitoring the results with interest. We urge both parties to continue to work towards a viable ceasefire. In that regard, it is important that the 2007 United Nations Strategy and Consolidated Action Plan address internally displaced person (IDP) returns in Uganda, as well as assistance to IDP camps. While IDPs may well continue to move between camps and their lands for some time, it is important to start laying a foundation for returns now.

The United States, however, is gravely concerned over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Darfur, including the possible new flows of refugees to Chad and weak implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. We must find a way to help reach a cessation of hostilities in Darfur, to help provide security for the civilians there and to support a process of dialogue rather than use of arms. We look forward to the outcome of next week's meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council, and we reiterate our call on the Government of the Sudan to welcome

deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Darfur.

We deeply regret the recent deaths of humanitarian workers in Darfur. We join others in underscoring the need to support individuals working in some of the most difficult areas of the world for the benefit of those in need.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): We too would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his very powerful briefing and very sobering description of the situation developing in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda. At the same time, we note encouraging signs of progress in the developments in those two countries.

As we heard in the briefing, there are still many disturbing acts of violence against civilians, as well as acts of gender-based violence, which the international community cannot disregard and must pay greater attention to.

In that regard, we believe that the international community must pay constant attention to implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1674 (2006). We agree with Mr. Egeland that we must not allow impunity in any country or in any region, and we must bring all violators of human rights and perpetrators of acts of violence and human rights abuses to justice.

At the same time, we noted, in connection with the negotiations between the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government of Uganda on the cessation of hostilities, that there are some calls for the leaders of the LRA to be guaranteed amnesty or impunity as a condition for accepting the cessation of hostilities. We would like to ask Mr. Egeland a question with regard to how that issue can be addressed: on the one hand, so as not to compromise the principles of impunity, and on the other hand — as Mr. Egeland noted — to use it as the last chance for peace in northern Uganda.

We share Mr. Egeland's view that the constant interest of the Security Council in the issue is crucial to progress in northern Uganda. That is why we would welcome regular briefings by him and by the Secretariat on developments in northern Uganda, as well as on how the Government of Uganda fulfils its commitments to address the grave social, humanitarian and economic situation in northern Uganda, including by the establishment of a sustainable and coherent recovery plan for the north.

Returning to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we share the opinion of Mr. Egeland that it is of the utmost importance to address the problem of violence committed against women and other grave violations of human rights perpetrated by the Congolese armed forces and militias. We think that effectively addressing this problem is one of the prerequisites for sustainable peace consolidation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

That is why we believe that additional efforts and resources are needed to speed up the process of security-sector reform in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Again, we think that a comprehensive action plan should be elaborated based on full compliance with and implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1674 (2006), with special attention given to the situation in the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In conclusion, we would like to underline the necessity of paying equal attention to all regions in Africa and trying to do everything possible to prevent humanitarian crises like those we have witnessed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and northern Uganda and to avert the humanitarian catastrophe currently unfolding in Darfur. In this respect, we are also concerned about the rapid deterioration of the humanitarian situation and the social and living conditions in Zimbabwe, which we are afraid might lead to an internal conflict similar to those we have witnessed in other parts of Africa. In this connection, we would like to ask Mr. Egeland whether he thinks that it is possible for the international community to act to prevent these situations from turning into violent conflicts.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, we would like to thank you and your delegation for convening this meeting. We would also like to welcome the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. Jan Egeland, and to congratulate him once more for his active efforts on behalf of civilian populations, especially the most vulnerable sectors. We are happy to have him once again with us. We attach great importance to the information that he regularly provides to the Security Council.

With regard to his statement today, we take note of the positive tone of some of his comments on his recent visit to Africa, in particular his cautious optimism with regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in northern Uganda. We know that that region has been the epicentre of the worst humanitarian tragedies that our generation has experienced. We trust that both countries will be able to start to follow a path that will take them to democratic normalcy after so much suffering and so many mistakes. However, we are still concerned, in particular, about the issue of sexual violence and we think that urgent steps need to be taken on that problem.

On another issue, the situation in Darfur, as we know and as the Council knows in depth, continues to be an urgent one. We cannot add much more to what we have recently heard from Mr. Egeland. Almost 3 million people in the region, without counting those in Chad, could be deprived of humanitarian assistance to enable them to survive, due to the re-escalation of violence in recent months. In this context, we would like to repeat that it is absolutely imperative to implement the provisions of resolution 1706 (2006) without further delay.

With regard to the Juba peace process and the slow progress that has been achieved, we think that it is necessary once again to support this process and invest in peace and reconciliation so as finally to put an end to this long and painful conflict that has afflicted the Acholi people for so many years. In this context, we think that one cannot negotiate impunity for the perpetrators of so much suffering for the civilian population. So that there can be peace, there needs to be accountability for those who have carried out massive violations of human rights. The Government of Uganda has voluntarily submitted the situation to the International Criminal Court, and we believe that the process, once initiated, should not stop. We support the actions of the Court, and we agree with Mr. Egeland that the international community, and in particular the mediators that are assisting in the Juba process, should seek innovative solutions that will harmonize the traditional systems which are common in reconciliation among the local civilian population with the requirements of international law. Once again, we state that peace cannot be achieved at the price of justice.

Finally, my delegation would like to state its condemnation of attacks on humanitarian personnel, in particular, the death of 12 humanitarian workers in the last two months in Darfur, and the constant physical aggression and harassment to which they are subject and that the Secretary-General has so vividly described in recent days. Attacking humanitarian personnel or preventing their activities not only violates fundamental principles of humanitarian law but it also imperils the means of survival of the 3 million people dependent on humanitarian aid. It is urgent for the violence to cease. The international community cannot allow innocent civilians to continue to die in the name of the right to self-defence.

To conclude, we would like to state our appreciation for Mr. Egeland's efforts in seeking to improve the situation of civilian populations. We value his commitment and we reaffirm that Argentina supports him in his daily task of protecting civilians in armed conflict.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): We thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his timely and informative briefing on his recent visit to the Central African region. We pay tribute to the Emergency Relief Coordinator for his unstinting efforts to address humanitarian crises in Africa and elsewhere, and particularly for his initiatives and efforts to highlight forgotten or neglected humanitarian crises.

We welcome some positive developments that have taken place recently in conflict zones in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda. But we must note that these moves toward settlement of conflict, though much welcomed, are very fragile. Therefore, sustained support is needed from the international community to make them stick and to address the humanitarian concerns and needs of the many affected people, including refugees and internally displaced persons, and in particular, to address the plight of the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, namely, women and children.

The agreement on the cessation of hostilities between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, the result of the facilitation efforts of the government authorities of South Sudan, is certainly a welcome positive step. With that agreement in place, it is now important to ensure that the cessation of hostilities holds and is respected by the parties, and that the favourable momentum that has been created

leads to further steps being taken for a peace agreement and a lasting resolution of the conflict.

It is also important that the next steps should continue to be led by Africans through the process that they have set in motion. But the international community must provide generous and sustained support, too. As refugees have already begun to return from their camps, the Joint Monitoring Committee, established in May this year, needs to accelerate its efforts to help implement the emergency humanitarian action plan. In this regard, we expect the United Nations, as a critical member of the Joint Monitoring Committee, to play its role effectively.

The question of impunity must also receive due attention. Impunity must end, and those responsible for crimes and offences against the civilian population must be brought to justice. At the same time, in any conflict resolution process, promoting reconciliation among warring parties is often a sensitive matter, and as such the right balance needs to be struck, so that, in the words of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, peace and justice work together.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are gratified to note the important progress that has been made in the political process, allowing the much-needed humanitarian space to increase. Here, too, as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees begin to return, the process needs to be supported and managed carefully so that tensions and instability are kept to a minimum. We therefore support the observation of the Emergency Relief Coordinator that the improvement of the humanitarian situation for the affected people must be pursued in tandem with the political process. A similar transition from humanitarian assistance to reconstruction is therefore indispensable.

Finally, I would like to say a word about the situation in southern Sudan. Concerns have been expressed about the recent resurgence of the activities of the so-called other armed groups. Frequent conflict between such groups and the Sudan People's Liberation Army is having a negative impact on the security situation there. Reaching an agreement among stakeholders is therefore critically important so that efforts can continue towards the consolidation of peace — specifically, the further return of refugees and IDPs after the rainy season, the progress of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and other objectives in the context of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. I would be happy to hear Mr. Egeland's views on the situation in southern Sudan.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I too would like to thank Jan Egeland for his briefing. I pay tribute to him for truly being our collective conscience and for doing so much to bring relief to all of the crises and disasters that he deals with.

I would like to start with the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo — an electoral process on a knife edge and unacceptable violence from 20 to 22 August between security forces loyal to President Kabila and those loyal to Vice President Bemba. Those second-round candidates owe it to the Congolese people to restate their commitment to the peace process and to resolve the political differences between them by peaceful means. After the election, it will be incumbent on all political parties to act responsibly within the framework of the new institutions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Given the massive investment that the Council and the United Nations have made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we will have to be ready to make very clear our condemnation of any violence and to make absolutely certain, to the extent that we can, that the democratic process comes out of this and makes progress.

We share the alarm expressed by Jan Egeland about the widespread and serious nature of the sexual and gender-based violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is not just a human rights concern; it has a long-term impact on peace and security. There is a moral imperative to ensure that there is no impunity for the perpetrators. There are also pragmatic reasons, because ending impunity contributes to a sustainable peace. That is why the efforts by the Congolese authorities — and we would like to see more of them — and the zero-tolerance approach of the Secretary-General are crucial in tackling those abuses. We should be clear that no one can be exempt from punishment for such crimes.

But our efforts will come to nothing if the scale of need in the Democratic Republic of the Congo remains as immense as it is today and if we fail to respond to it. We need a greater response delivery that is coordinated, and we need to make sure that we do

not spoil what has been achieved by being unable to see it through.

Turning to the situation on the ground in Uganda, which changes by the day, I welcome very much, speaking from a British viewpoint, the steps now being taken by the Ugandan Government. We have long believed that there could never be a purely military solution to the conflict in the north. We therefore very much welcome the signing of the cessation of hostilities agreement between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Ugandan Government.

There is no question that there is a long way to go before we actually get a comprehensive negotiated settlement. But such unease as I had about the process in Juba was, I have to say, partly assuaged by the fact that Ian Egeland himself was actually in Juba talking to people. Despite the progress being made, however, 1.7 million people are still living in extremely difficult conditions in camps for internally displaced persons, and that has to be a major concern.

I hope that the arrangements being put in place by the Government in Kampala, and the measures which will flow out to northern Uganda through the Joint Monitoring Committee, will, in a mix of cooperation between the Government, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations family and those countries that are trying to help the process, ensure progress and actually keep up the pressure for sustained movement. The Government of Uganda has reacted well in recent months. It deserves our support so that it can see through what it is trying to do.

Ending conflict, ensuring stability and demobilizing and demilitarizing the fighters must be the priorities. I think that we all have to recognize that reintegration and reconciliation will be very, very difficult. But in addition, an essential part of a better future will be the establishment of the rule of law and the delivery of justice — justice which ensures stability, progress and reconciliation and which will inevitably require an end to impunity for those who have committed the gravest of crimes against humanity. But there is a sequence which we should sensibly follow.

There are, of course, many situations of humanitarian concern in Africa which merit our attention, and we have addressed only some of them this morning. Darfur has been referred to. Let me stress the need to actually implement resolution 1706 (2006), to get the mandate of the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) extended and ensure that the Mission is reinforced, and to make sure that we are taking all the steps that we should take to deliver security in Chad, expecting that we may have to face an influx of more refugees into Chad — and we look forward to proposals from the Secretary-General in that respect — and that all of us maximize the pressure on the Government in Khartoum to actually accept a United Nations force to replace AMIS.

Looking beyond Chad, one of the situations that a number of colleagues have referred to and which I, too, want to pick up on, is the situation in Zimbabwe. Mr. Egeland briefed the Council on this following his mission in December (see S/PV.5331). It would be very helpful to have an update on how he now sees it, and some thoughts about what all of us in the United Nations family can do to try and ameliorate what is an increasingly grim situation.

As I understand it, more than one year after Operation Murambatsvina, displacements continue, and almost none of the victims of that operation have benefited from the so-called programme of re-housing. But the issue is not just re-housing. There is a severe food shortage, which is not just down to the drought. This is the fifth year in succession that there has been such a shortage. Inflation is running in excess of 1,200 per cent. and the blatant and continuing disregard for human rights is there for all to see.

That is not just a domestic crisis for Zimbabwe; it is resulting in migration flows, placing enormous burdens on neighbouring countries and producing inherent instability. So it would be very helpful if the Under-Secretary-General could give us his perception of the scale of the difficulties and how we can help the people of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Dolgov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Egeland for his comprehensive briefing on his trip to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to Uganda. The humanitarian situation in those States continues to be very complex and requires continued comprehensive international cooperation. Major changes in the humanitarian situation in those countries and in other countries on the continent can take place only with the effective long-term settlement of the conflicts with the help of the United Nations, the

African Union, African subregional organizations and other interested parties.

A successful solution to humanitarian problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons, will depend to a significant extent on the peace process going forward, and in particular on the effective implementation of the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

With the help of the United Nations and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congolese parties must continue to work towards a political settlement, in particular within the context of preparations for the important second round of elections. Of course, responsibility regarding the humanitarian crimes that have been committed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, as in other conflict zones in Africa, remains an important element of any long-term comprehensive settlement.

The signing of a ceasefire agreement between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army, with the facilitation of the government of South Sudan, offers prospects for a final settlement of the conflict in the northern part of the country and for an easing of the situation of the population in that region. We need full and strict compliance with this agreement, and the situation in that country must be permanently stabilized. We view as a step in the right direction the Government of Uganda's plan for a gradual easing of the humanitarian situation in the north of the country. At this crucial point for reaching a settlement, the international community must provide wide-ranging support and encouragement, including financial support, so that the comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of northern Uganda can be carried out successfully.

We trust that, as they gather momentum, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Central Emergency Response Fund will help improve the humanitarian situation in Africa and promote the successful rehabilitation of African States recovering from conflict. The Russian Federation, for its part, will continue to do everything possible to promote the solutions to these challenges.

Ms. Tincopa (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We, too, would like to thank Mr. Egeland for his update on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Cong in Uganda. We are happy that there have been improvements in those countries. In that conne we welcome the agreement signed betwee Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resi Army.

Although there has been major progress, I b that the challenges are even greater. In this con would like to point to some elements that the Se Council and the international community ne continue to work on. The first is the humani situation. In the Democratic Republic of the Cong example, the situation remains critical. Although has been some progress, and although there have efforts in establishing democratic institutions a holding elections, the task is far broader than th our view, that task needs to go hand in hand economic progress. The social development o country is of great importance, as is respect for th of law.

The second element is the issue of impunit consider that the Security Council and all p concerned need to continue to work to end imp We support the International Criminal Court play significant role in seeking reconciliation punishment for those who violate human right believe that there can be no reconciliation if thos are responsible go unpunished and if due attent not paid to the victims of these crimes.

Another situation relates to violence again civilian population. The Security Council nee continue to work to protect civilians and to e respect for and guarantees of their human r Violence against women is unacceptable; I think the Security Council must send a very clear me about putting an end to this practice, whi becoming habitual in some African cou Governments need to be responsible for taking to put an end to this practice.

Yet another issue is that of internally disp persons. Assistance to these people must continue a priority. We all realize the difficult situatio internally displaced persons in Darfur, in Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Uganda a Chad. In this context, we want to stress the impor of speedy implementation of resolution 1706 (for internally displaced persons in Darfur and in C

With regard to the financial situation, we believe that the international community needs to continue to provide additional resources and seek intelligent ways and means to obtain financial assistance. Without such assistance, populations in these African countries will continue to suffer, and many more human lives will be lost.

I have a question for Mr. Egeland on the process for the forthcoming second round of elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Is there any indication that this might lead to a resurgence of violence or a deterioration of the security situation? Is there a plan to prevent any aggravation of the humanitarian crisis? Have discussions been held with the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or has Mr. Egeland's Office undertaken a programme to prevent that potential situation?

Mr. Al-Qahtani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to thank Mr. Egeland for his briefing, which we followed attentively.

It is very sad to note today that the rape of women has become a spreading cancer in the society of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It is sad indeed that those who commit such crimes do so with impunity. I ask myself: Why do we forget that crisis, only to focus on others? Where have we been while the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has deteriorated so drastically? Clearly, the situation in that country requires surgery to remove the spreading cancer. We therefore agree with Mr. Egeland that the Council should do everything in its power to end impunity and fully to apply criminal justice in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

History proves that national dialogue and reconciliation represent the best hope for peace in conflict situations, as borne out by recent developments in Uganda. We must therefore continue to support efforts for peace in northern Uganda. In that regard, we again agree with Mr. Egeland that the Council must help the Government of Uganda to settle the problem in the North and to promote reconciliation and national dialogue to address the root causes of that problem in order to save innocent lives.

The main thrust of the statements made by Mr. Egeland and representatives today is that the best hope for achieving peace in Darfur lies not in transferring authority from the African Union Mission in Sudan to the United Nations Mission in the Sudan, but in calling on the rebel movements to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement, to enhance national reconciliation and dialogue in Darfur, and to strengthen the legal and judicial systems in order to bring to justice all those who have violated international humanitarian law and to pay the necessary compensation to the victims of the violence there, in accordance with the applicable legal and judicial framework.

We reiterate our hope that such an approach and such a philosophy will be applied to all the struggles in Africa, not just that in Darfur.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Greece.

I would like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Mr. Egeland, for today's very interesting briefing on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, northern Uganda and other areas.

The political situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although still fragile, gives us reason to be optimistic about an overall improvement of the situation as soon as a democratically elected Government is in place. In the meantime, violence still poses an ongoing threat to untold numbers of Congolese, including the sexual abuse of women, particularly in the strife-torn eastern provinces, while in Katanga the problem of 150,000 internally displaced persons persists.

We should commend the efforts of the United Nations humanitarian agencies working in the field — engaging in a humanitarian marathon, I would say — and, as Mr. Egeland said, saving lives on a daily basis, despite the dire conditions in which they work.

There is also hope for a political settlement in northern Uganda following the Juba agreement with the Lord's Resistance Army. The 20-year conflict has caused immense suffering, with thousands of victims and 2 million people displaced. Everybody has understood that no military solution could be applied. Only the success of the peace process can create the sense of security necessary for the safe return of the internally displaced persons and the rebuilding of the Acholi and Ugandan societies. We should do our utmost to support it. Regional actors and the international community should spare no effort to ensure that resources are adequately allocated to

northern Uganda, including for humanitarian assistance and the sustainable reintegration of the conflict-affected population.

As far as the Sudan and, more particularly, Darfur are concerned, in 2003 we had the largest operation in the world, which was extremely effective. Now, unfortunately, it is at the brink of total collapse, touching what some have called the Rwandan threshold. Indicatively, during the past few weeks, the number of gross violations of human rights, including rape, has risen dramatically. The number of internally displaced persons has risen by 50,000, while humanitarian access has been severely restricted due to the fact that humanitarian workers are being targeted. In July alone, nine humanitarian workers were killed.

In that context, we believe strongly that the only way to improve the situation is if we all work collectively to implement resolution 1706 (2006) and to uphold the Darfur Peace Agreement. As we have said before, there cannot be any military solution to the Darfur crisis.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to Mr. Egeland to respond to the comments and questions raised.

Mr. Egeland: I offer warm thanks to all members of the Council for their encouraging comments, advice and questions.

Indeed, as I have come to brief the Council on Africa regularly these past three years, I feel as if I have come mostly with bad tidings, including after my first big trip in 2003 to northern Uganda and the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was profoundly shocked by what I saw and deeply pessimistic after leaving our humanitarian colleagues on the ground.

This time, we have a very positive message that two of the worst wars of our time, age and generation — the wars in eastern Congo and the war in northern Uganda — can be brought to an end. It is not often that we have that kind of historic opportunity, and we should not fail as we work together to bring an end to the haemorrhage of human life in the eastern Congo and to the enormous suffering, especially of children, in northern Uganda. Twenty thousand children were kidnapped in northern Uganda. That is unparalleled anywhere in the world.

Now, as we see that militias are giving up their arms in the eastern Congo and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) is assembling at the assembly points in the southern Sudan, we need urgent action to stabilize the situation and we need a flexible way of responding. We want to give the Mayi Mayi soldiers, whom I saw giving up their arms, the $110 package and some tools to become carpenters or to resume work as farmers. That is not happening at the moment. The alternative could take effect, and they could go back to raping and pillaging the civilian population.

Hopefully, the 400 LRA fighters who have come to the assembly points will be joined by thousands of others, by our estimation, at the two assembly points in the southern Sudan. We would rather have them there, eating canned food, watching videos or doing whatever they wish, than going back to northern Uganda and starting the whole indiscriminate attack on the civilian population again. That would spare a lot of human suffering and save us a lot of money in terms of life-saving humanitarian assistance.

The representative of the United States commented that there should now be a consistent recovery effort, to be included in the appeals for 2007. Indeed, the country teams are working very hard as we speak on a very ambitious programme covering the areas of recovery, reconstruction and the protection of civilians in eastern Congo and northern Uganda. That will be included in the 2007 appeal that the Secretary-General, with my assistance, will launch at the end of November from this very building.

I also agree with those who commented that we need more help to realize that programme. We often feel that we round up the usual suspects when we want to foot the bill for such historic reconstruction programmes. That usually involves a dozen donors, the same ones over and over again. There are five dozen viable economies in the world, and they should all contribute.

Many commented on reconciliation and peace, on the one hand, and justice and accountability, on the other. I think that Africa is a model for other continents in terms of reconciliation, being able to build bridges and looking to the future. Europeans, Middle Easterners and Asians can learn from that. What is a problem in Africa is that too often it has been forgive and forget, and there has not seemed to be much of an interest among political, military and economic elites

to put an end to impunity for serious violations of human rights, including rampant sexual abuse. What we are therefore striving for now is peace with justice. That can come in many ways in northern Uganda. I am sure that we will succeed in northern Uganda.

I was very heartened to hear that the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) himself has called for work to be done now to end the war, ensure the demobilization of soldiers and so forth and develop something that will satisfy national and international laws, including the Rome Statute, as well as the local need for reconciliation and the local interest in the use of traditional justice mechanisms. I think that the ICC indictments will not be a stumbling block, and that they can actually provide impetus for future progress towards peace in northern Uganda, which is now at hand.

The representative of Peru asked about the second round of elections and the chances of their being free, fair and secure. I think there are very good possibilities for that. I congratulate our colleagues in the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) for what they did in the first elections. I also wish to congratulate Bill Swing, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, for what he has done of late with many ambassadors in Kinshasa to reconcile the tensions between the two contenders in the second round of presidential elections. I feel very confident that we are now going to have good elections. I really hope, and we all pray, that the results of the elections will not lead to further tension.

But the marathon in the Congo has only been half run. The billions of dollars the international community has invested in MONUC must now be supplemented with future investments in peace, security and reconstruction. It was a very bad sign that many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have now been told that they are likely to have less money for humanitarian work in 2007, and that many of their colleagues working in the area of development were given no promises of increased funding for 2007. That is a bad omen for our ability to finish the marathon.

The representative of Denmark, as well as the representatives of several other countries including Qatar, referred to Darfur. Let me just say the following in that regard. I fear that we will return many times to Darfur. We are growing increasingly desperate as humanitarian actors. Today we released $4.5 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for helicopters to try to reach groups with whom we have lost all contact by road. We will go in with those helicopters when there is a lull in the fighting, in an attempt to deliver food and exit quickly. That is a very crude life-saving measure, which in a way shows how great the desperation has become in our attempts to keep people alive.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is sending more staff to Darfur as we speak, in an effort to help NGOs stay. Non-governmental organizations are now all debating whether to leave. One non-governmental organization recently lost five out of seven of its vehicles to car-jacking and armed robbery by various armed groups, including rebels, Janjaweed militia and organized crime groups on the ground. If NGOs leave, it will be like pulling the plug. The result will be an end to humanitarian relief. Were the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) to leave, the effect would be exactly the same. All who now have influence — African neighbours, Arab States, Islamic States, China and westerners — have to do what they can in the coming days to impress upon the Government, the rebels and everyone else the need to avoid a meltdown, which would be beyond description.

The Permanent Representative of Japan asked about the situation in southern Sudan. I was encouraged by what I saw there. But there is also the fear that the progress in southern Sudan will also be threatened by a possible collapse in Darfur. We must therefore endeavour to avoid having another conflict to deal with. With the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) now in assembly points rather than continuing to loot, pillage and attack, the situation has improved in southern south Sudan. The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has been able to absorb several armed groups that were on the loose earlier. The United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS) has brokered agreements between the SPLA and other local groups. In short, the situation is now so good that the security level was lowered from phase-IV to phase-III just a few weeks ago. Things in southern Sudan are going in the right direction, but they continue to be very fragile.

Several representatives mentioned the situation in the Southern African region, and in Zimbabwe in particular. In addition, the representative of Denmark asked about the present humanitarian situation. When I

visited last year, after the disastrous eviction campaign, Government officials showed me a number of houses under construction. I was promised that all those who had been evicted would end up in better housing than they had before. The fact of the matter is that 92,460 housing structures were destroyed during Operation Murambatsvina. That is our firm estimate based on Government information. Very few — some 3,325 houses — have been built, as opposed to the more than 90,000 structures that were demolished. Those new houses went to many people who had not been evicted. Indeed, those who were in bad housing before this operation are in even worse conditions today.

The Amnesty International report that just came out is, in the view of our colleagues on the ground, to the point. No inaccuracies were found. We ourselves have tried to construct housing for the evicted, and, altogether, some 1,400 temporary shelters were constructed. In general, it has been very difficult to do so, because there has not been any Government cooperation at all to make it happen. We have released $2 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund for housing for those in need.

The harvest will, thankfully, be better this year than last year in Zimbabwe. Better rains may be the best explanation for that. Still, 1 million people will be in need of food assistance. Social services are still declining, the economy is still declining, and vulnerability is greatly increasing. We need more funding for our appeal, which is badly underfunded in Zimbabwe, and we need diplomatic and other help to try to get out of a very vicious circle in Zimbabwe — a country that could easily feed itself and which is now in a very steep decline in terms of social indicators.

Finally, I acknowledge the wish expressed by the Ambassador of Tanzania that, next time, there be a greater review of the situation in southern Africa and in other parts of Africa. I am very grateful for the regular invitations of the Council to brief on these situations and I am always willing to come whenever the Council has time to hear from me and from my humanitarian colleagues.

The President: I thank Mr. Egeland for the clarifications he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list.

The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.